

Sacramento March 31. D. 1851.

My dear Sister!

I improve the present opportunity of writing to you. Early this morning I went to the Post Office & after waiting several hours I received your letter dated Dec 25. You cannot imagine my feelings this was the first word that I had heard from any of my friends. A long year had passed, with many a dark and gloomy hour - many lonesome & toil worn days - many a day of distant friends & happy moments had faded with fierce strife the cares & the scolding storms of life. I had looked long but vainly for some kind letter that would tell me of distant friends.

But the message came at last & as I read your letter it seemed that I was really conversing with you & dear were the fancied memories of the past.

I sometimes feel very lonesome - but excited, the exciting scenes of such a country as this lonesomeness is often a relief of its sting. I have traveled through nearly all the mines in California, but as yet have had but little success there are so many persons in the mines that all which is known to be rich in gold is claimed & the greater part of the old mines are worked out as the chances for making much in California among the old diggings are few.

The winter has been remarkably open & mild these felt but little rain & the only place where snow has fallen, has been on the mountains. Last February I went into the mountains in company with J. Donnelly of Iowa to explore the head waters of the Snake River. After traveling about 80 miles we reached the region of perpetual snow. Near was winter ice correct the snow was about 50 feet in depth on the summit of the ridges. Near this was a small valley

in which the snow was about 20 feet in depth there
a company of 5 men & 40 mules all perished & still
lay buried beneath the snow. In many places the wolves
had dug through the snow to their bodies. 10 miles from
this place we found a company of Indians, this was the
last out post of the mines. Near we bought as much
provisions as we could carry & went on, we saw
the three branches of Feather river & followed up the
north branch through deep snow among Indian
towns & over great mountains to the summit
of the Sierra Nevada we were now about 200 miles
from the nearest settlements & it was evident
that the company reported to be at work, near this
place had either left last fall or been killed by the
Indians which were very hostile to the whites. This place
looked much like a mining country but we could not
tell much about it on account of the deep snow.

We turned back but ere we reached the settlements our
provisions were exhausted & for four days we were out of any
kind of food except bark. This trip being unsuccess-
ful I went to Nevada where I staid a short time.

While I was there I heard from Mr. Thompson
he had gone to the Washoe River & gave a very favorable
report of the place I am now on my way further I
shall start for San Francisco this afternoon & from thence
by sea to Princeton Bay.

With Cordine Bowers that I saw her father in Nevada, on
the 22 inst. he was in good health & was going to work on the
Luby. Directly after I got into this time I wrote to
B. H. Robinson & about one week ago I received his letter but
it was written last October & he is probably at home for
this time he was at the time of writing on the Spanish
Bar on the Middle branch of the American River and
in good health.

I am very glad to hear that you are all well. I should like to meet you all again, but when I shall have that pleasure is known only to him who rules in mercy on the throne of omnipotence. Tell Grandmother not to give herself any uneasiness on my account for I enjoy good health & am now pretty well used to this climate. Tell Mrs George Brussel that I send her my best wishes & that a long letter would be received with great much pleasure. Kiss my kind regards to Miss Van Ness with my sincere thanks. Tell Matilda that she must not forget me for I shall be back by and by.

Uncle John has written truth in Sabbath School. In place of the holy cathedrals upon an eastern village: loud strains of music from theaters, dice houses & gambling saloons were every town & city in California & mingled with the various kinds of music & the shouts of Auctioneers is the word of blasphemous language of the stars & the gay ship which indeed are many. I have stood & saw men, after men shot down, until I would feel sick at to see them set in & seek in loneliness a shelter from such sickening scenes. The Bible you gave me has long been my only companion on the Sabbath. The mail will leave in a few minutes so I must beg my letter to a sudden stop.

Give my best respects to all inquiring friends. Bid all my Brothers, Uncles & Cousins to write to me. At present I cannot give my address but I shall write as soon as I get to my journey's end.

Wm. H. Steele.

Yours affectionately
Brother John Steele

The Newberry Library

The Everett D. Geffert Collection
of Western Americana

3962

40

Wm. L. G. Loretta, St. Louis
La. Columbia, Co.

Missouri

Sacramento, March 31, 1851

My Dear Sister:

I improve the present opportunity of writing to you. Early this morning I went to the Post Office & after waiting several hours I received your letter dated Dec. 25. You cannot imagine my feelings (sic) this was the first word that I had heard from any of my friends. A long year had passed with many a dark and gloomy hour - many lonesome & toil-worn days, many a dream of distant friends and happy moments had faded with firc (sic) strife the cares & the scowling storms of life. I had looke long but vainly for some kind letter that would tell me of distant friends.

But the message came at last & as I read your letter it seemed that I was really conversing with you so clear wer(sic) the fancied memories of the past

I sometimes feal (sic) very lonesome - but amid the exciting sceans (sic) of such a country as this loneliness is often robed(sic) of its sting. I have traveled through nearly all the mines in California but as yet I have had but little success there are so many persons in the mines that all which is known to be rich in gold is claimed & the greater part of the old mines are worked out so the chances for making much in California among the old diggings ar few

The winter has been remarkably open & mild there fell but little rain & the only place where snow has fallen has been on the mountains. Last January I went into the mountains in company with L. Donnelly of Iowa to explore the headwaters of Feather River. After traveling about 80 miles we reached the region of perpetual snow hear (sic) was winter in ernest the snow was about 50 feet in depth on the summit of the ridges. Near this was a small valley in which the snow was about 20 feet

in depth here a company of 5 men & 40 mules all perished & still lay buried beneath the snow. In many places the wolves had dug through the snow to their bodies. 10 miles from this place we found a company of miners, this was the last outpost of the mines. here we bought as much provisions as we could carry & went on we swam the three branches of Feather river & followed up the north branch through deep snows - among Indian towns and over great mountains at the summit of the Sierra Nevada we were now about 200 miles from the nearest settlements & it was evident that the company reported to be at work near this place had either left last fall or been killed by the Indians which were very hostile to the whites. This place looked much like a mining country but we could not tell much about it on account of the deep snow. We turned back but ere we reached the settlements our provisions were exhausted & for four days we were out of any kind of food except bark. This trip being unsuccessful I went to Nevada where I staid a short time

While I was there I heard from Mr. Shimmons he had gone to the Klamath River & gave a very favorable report of the place I am now on my way thither I shall start for San Francisco this afternoon & from thence by sea to Trinidad Bay.

Tell Carline Bowers that I saw her father in Nevada on the 22d inst. he was in good health & was going to work on the Yuba. Directly after I got into the mines I wrote to B. H. Robinson[&] about one week ago I received his letter but it was written last October & he is probably at home by this time he was at the time of Wrighting(sic) on the Spanish Bar on the middle branch of the American River and in good health.

I am very glad to hear that you are all well I should like to meet you all again but when I shall have that pleasure is known only to

him who rules in mercy on the throne of omnipotence. Tell Grandmother not to give herself any uneasiness on my account for I enjoy good health & am now pretty well used to this climate. Tell Mrs. George Fressel that I send her my best wishes & that a long letter would be received with great much pleasure. Also my kind regards to Miss Van Ness with my sincere thanks. Tell Matilda that she must not forget me for I shall be back by and by.

Uncle John has written truly in . . .
Sabath here. In place of the holy . . .
upon an eastern village. Loud strains of . . .
from theatre, circuses & gambling saloons which . . .
every town & city in California & mingled with the . . .
various kinds of music & the shouts of auctioneers . . .
is the horid & blasphemous language of the votaries . . .
the grog shop which indeed are many. I have stood . . .
& saw man after man shot down untill I would feel sick at heart then retire
& seek in loneliness a shelter from such sickening scenes. The Bible you
gave me has long been my only companion on the Sabath. The mail will leave
in a few minutes so I must bring my letter to a sudden stop.

Give my best respects to all enquiring friends Tell all my
Brothers Uncles & Cousins to write to me. At present I cannot give my
address but I shall write as soon as I get to my journey

I still remain

Your affectionate

Brother John Steele

Loretta Steele

Miss Anna H. H. H. H.

November 6 1852.

My dear Sister

It is already late in the evening, but as I have been thinking much about you, I think I must send you a few lines, from which you may learn that I am in the enjoyment of good health, & in fact I have but little to say. Times are hard now in this country, particularly for those who have lately come into the mines & do not pay for working as well as the old time - I think generally - & the price of provisions is nearly as much as it then was. On the night of the 2 inst. a violent fire was burned to ashes but few of the houses being left.

As yet there has been but one day rain & the only sign of approaching winter is occasionally a white frost. The sky is generally perfectly clear & the days are warm & pleasant.

It seems I am doing a tolerable
good business mining on a bar
but shall have my diggings worked
out in a few weeks. I shall then go
back a few miles to the dry diggings
& perhaps continue in the mining
business.

I presume you think I have
played the rascal; long enough & should
return now. Well, all I have to say
about that is — not yet. Last
week I received a letter from Uncle
John he has settled in Wisconsin &
you know if there are any of his family
ever not well I would mention it.

It is now a long time since I
have had a letter from you & I am
very anxious to hear from Wisconsin
& Mrs Edwards's mission terminated
in New York I wish to know all the
particulars. You write often a letter
is acceptable "at all times & seasons"

It is now very late at night &
my light is fading out.

can. search, see & with all. Have just
finished a Sea. & now work on
the paper, will appreciate the
letter & I will say to you that
I'm. Good night & close.

John Steele

Fuller

To come to Los Angeles
California

The Newberry Library

The Everett D. Graff Collection
of Western Americana

3963

Mr Edward S. Steele
C. Hays, Iowa

Laurens
Seymour County Wisconsin

Rio da los Americanos,
November 6, 1852.

My dear Sister --

It is already late in the evening, but as I have been thinking much about you I think I must send you a few lines, from which you may learn that I am in the enjoyment of good health & in fact I have but little else to say. Times are here [hard] now in this country particularly for those who have lately come in, the mines do not pay for working as well as the [they] did two years ago - that is generally - & the price of provisions is nearly as much as it then was. On the night of the 2 inst. Sacramento City was burned to ashes but few of the houses being left.

As yet there has been but one days rain & the only sign of approaching winter is occasionally a white frost. The sky is generally perfectly clear & the days warm & pleasant [pleasant].

At present I am doing a tolerable good bus[i]ness mining on a bar but shall have my dig[g]ings worked out in a few weeks. I shall then go back a few miles to the clay [?] diggings and perhaps continue in the mining bus[i]ness.

I persume [sic] you think I have played truant long enough & should return now. Well, all I have to say about that is ---- not yet. Last week I received a letter from Uncle John he has settled in Missouri & you know if he, or any of his family wer[e] not well I would mention it.

It is now a long time since I have had a letter from you & I am very ancious [sic] to hear from Wisconsin & how Edward's mission terminated in New York I wish to know all the particulars [sic]. Do write often a letter is acceptable "at all times & seasons".

It is now very late at night & my light burns so dimly that I can scarcely see & with all I have just finished a hard week's work, so I hope you will excuse this short letter & I will say to my dear Sister Good night & close.

John Steele.

Address
Coloma El Dorado Co
California

Rio de los Americanos
November 6 1852

41c with Graft 3963

My dear Sister -

It is already late in the evening, but as I have been thinking much about you I think I must send you a few lines, from which you may learn that I am in the enjoyment of good health & in fact I have but little else to say. Times are here [hard] now in this country particularly for those who have lately come in, the mines do not pay for working as well as the[y] did two years ago - that is generally - & the price of provisions is nearly as much as it then was. On the night of the 21st. Sacramento City was burned to ashes but few of the houses being left.

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John Steele.

Address
Coloma El Dorado Co
California

[The letter, which apparently was not enclosed in an envelope, is addressed to]

Mr Edward D Steele
Cottage Inn
Layff
Layfaett County Wisconsin